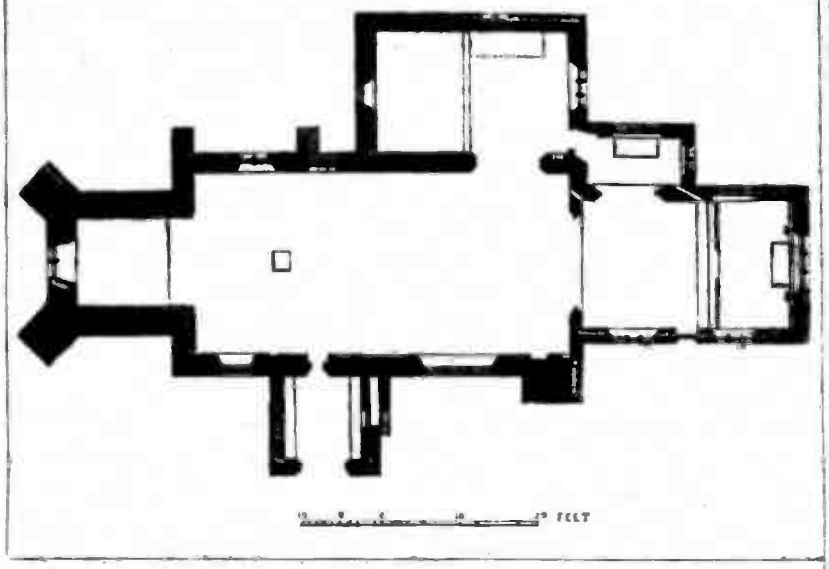
CLAPTON CHURCH, SOMERSETSHIRE.



CLAPTON CHURCH, SOMERSETSHIRE.

THE prettily-situated parish church of Clapton, about 10 miles from Bristol, consists, as will be seen by the accompanying plan, of a nave, chancel, tower at the west end, south porch, and a north chapel, with a sacristy adjoining. The general style of the building is transition between the Early English and Decorated; but, like most churches, not without its share of Perpendicular additions and alterations.

The tower is of two stages, low and massive, and has buttresses, set diagonally with two set-offs, the lower part increasing in bulk to about twice the width and projection of the stage above. The west window is of two lights, with a hood mould, having the tooth ornament exceedingly large. The belfry has plain one-light windows; and the parapet is panelled. The tower arch is open, plain, recessed, chamfered, and supported by small engaged shafts, with heads forming capitals. There is no turret staircase.

The porch (the only entrance at present to the church) is quite plain, and has had a parvise; the steps leading thereto, with the two-light window and niche, still remain.

The nave has two square-headed perpendicular windows, south, and one square-headed perpendicular, and a decorated window over a blocked-up doorway, north. The doorway to the rood turret is also walled up. There are a number of open seats, low, massive, and of an early character, but "earthly pride and vain distinction" is here, as in most village churches, in the shape of the well-known square "pew." The dimensions of the open seats are as follows:—Width of pew from back to back, 3 feet 6½ inches; width of seat, 11 inches; height of ditto from floor of pew, 1 foot 4 inches: width of book board, 6 inches; height of top rail, 2 feet 4½ inches; width of end, 1 foot 8 inches. The ends are fixed in sleepers, 5 inches by 6 inches.

The chancel arch is plain, supported by small shafts, with caps of oak leaf foliage, but are so entirely coated with yellow wash as scarcely to be distinguished. In the north pier of the arch is a "hagioscope," or squint.

The chancel has lost the "dim religious light," which doubtless it once possessed, by the introduction of large square-headed perpendicular windows, two in the south and one in the north wall. The east window is also perpendicular, of three lights; and op-arch and the details exceedingly poor. There has been a priest's door, but it has shared the same fate as the north doorway of the nave. It is evident, then, that this part of the church is not worthy of much notice, except it were for the piscina, and for its having still retained the ancient latten candlesticks: they are supported by pillars, attached to a plain perpendicular wooden reredos. The piscina is good; it has a drop-arch, supported by detached shafts, with caps of stiff foliage and moulded bases, and it has a round hood mould, with terminations formed by a trefoil leaf. The floor of the chancel is raised about 4 inches above that of the nave.

The sacristy is entered from the "Holy-place" by a decorated arch (of the same character as the chancel arch), through the eastern jaumb of which is another "hagioscope." The east window is early, of two lights, cusped in the soffit, with a circle in the head, enclosing a quatrefoil, in which are some remnants of painted glass. In the north wall is a square-headed perpendicular window: under it stands a stone altar, probably the original one of the chapel: the slab is 5 feet 10 inches by 3 feet 1 inch, by 6 inches thick; and the height 2 feet 8 inches. It is perfectly plain; not even any crosses visible. In the north corner of the west wall is a small, low, segmental pointed doorway, leading to the chapel, which communicates with the nave by a segmental pointed arch, doubly recessed, chamfered; the outer chamfers are carried down to within about 6 inches of the floor, while the other part of the arch springs from the plain wall at about 4 feet above. It has a hood mould formed by the roll moulding and a slight hollow, and is continued to the springing of the arch, where it is curled outwards, forming a termination peculiar to this style (Early Decorated). There is a small cinquefoil-headed piscina in the eastern pier of the arch on the north side. It has a quatrefoil basin, and the arch is supported by small engaged shafts. There is a three-light window in the east wall; the heads cusped, and the spandrils pierced under one arch: style, Transitional. The sill is lowered inside to within 3 feet of the floor. The lights are filled with stained glass; the quarrels are all similar in design, viz., a green leaf, or flower, with a pink centre, on a white ground. Each light has a border, 1¾ inches wide, filled with different colours: the glass is in very fine preservation, not a particle of it being broken or missing. There has been a north window of two lights, ogee head, but it is now blocked up in order to make room for a large unsightly monument, reaching nearly to the roof, and bedaubed with a variety of colours. The west window is a plain lancet. The floor of the western part of the chapel is about 9 inches higher than the east end, and is composed chiefly of monumental slabs of late date. Both the east window of the chapel and sacristy, outside, have no hood mould, but merely the chamfer continued round each light, and as little stone as possible used for the dressings. Whether the church has any wardens, I cannot say; there are no visible signs of such men; but, on the contrary, the dilapidated state of portions of the building, the filthy condition in which it is kept, and the quantity of dirt every where visible, even on the holy table itself, show that there are none in the true sense of the word.

If our Catholic forefathers could but arise and see the condition of many of our *still* beautiful churches, would they not exclaim, in the words of the Psalmist,—"Thine adversaries roar in the midst of thy congregations, and set up their banners for tokens. He that hewed timber afore out of the thick trees was known to bring it to an excellent work. But now they break down all the carved work thereof with axes and hammers. They have set fire upon thy holy places, and have defiled the dwelling-place of thy name, even unto the ground."

FILIUS ECCLESIÆ.

ORIGINAL FORMS IN ARCHITECTURE.

"I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good, but it was pain and grief to me."

OUR spirit is once and again moved within us, by Mr. Phipson's remarks upon modern architectural practice, to make a suggestion which has hitherto been kept back by the anticipation of its probable difficulties; but THE BUILDER we know countenances original thought, and there is, therefore, a ray of hope that the stimulating proverb, "where there's a will there's a way," may yet receive its fulfilment in this as in other matters.

The proposition is this, that a column of THE BUILDER be opened for original forms and ideas in architecture. This heading must be further explained by remarking that a house is not an original idea, but its parts and details of its parts may be: a church is not an original idea, but its parts and details of its parts may be. Such original details, be they in Grecian, Roman, English, or other architecture, we would have collected and encouraged in such a work as THE BUILDER: proviso—they being good, which of course would be decided by yourself. To save expense and trouble, the drawings should be in lines, with or without letter-press descriptions, at the option of yourself to admit them, and drawings not accepted should not be returned.

J. W. H.

BRISTOL ATHENÆUM SOIRÉE.

THE supporters of this institution gave a *soirée* on Wednesday week, at which the mayor of Bristol presided, and a large assemblage of the *élite* of the city were addressed by Lord Teignmouth, Mr. Miles, M.P., Dr. Symonds, and others, and resolutions were unanimously passed to the effect that, "It is very desirable that time and opportunity should be afforded to persons engaged in business for intellectual and moral improvement." That "Although light and desultory reading may only amuse, and although superficial knowledge may sometimes encourage natural conceit and presumption, yet these abuses need not deter us from endeavouring to dispel ignorance and error, by diffusing useful information and inculcating truth," &c. In proposing the first resolution, Lord Teignmouth remarked that proper leisure could not be said to *interfere* with either business or duty. What is more true, said his lordship, than that rest is necessary to our nature?—a sentiment almost hallowed and consecrated by a memorable sentence of one of our greatest philosophers, Lord Bacon,—a sentiment which, though it might appear a simple truism, is a most important truth, and one which has been sadly overlooked and forgotten in this restless, turbulent, and self-destroying age, a truth which has not only received the signet of the philosophers but has been stamped with divine sanction. "The pause reinforceth the onset;" and that man who has "rest from his labours" is able to see the bearings of his business and position, and the relation of his various duties, and is thus infinitely better able to discharge these duties than if ground down in perpetual and servile drudgery.

I conceive, added his lordship, that the humblest mechanic, as well as the person engaged in the most extensive concerns of business in this city or elsewhere, has a threefold obligation; he is bound to his employer, to his country, and to his God. And it is my firm belief that the Athenæum and similar institutions, when under proper regulations, do not interfere with any of the duties thus devolving on any individual, but really enable him to discharge them better.

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